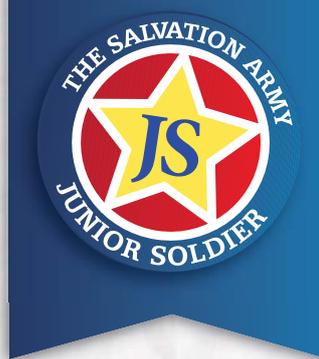


# Junior Soldiers

Unit 7 : Lesson 2



## You're the one God needs for the job!

**PURPOSE :** For the children to explore and understand that God might ask us to do things we don't want to do, but – with His help – we can do it.

*'Christ gives me the strength to face anything.'*

Philippians 4:13

## Consider & Prepare

### Read:

Read the book of Jonah  
Philippians 4:13

The story of Jonah is one that is well known to many people not just church goers; Jonah and the whale/big fish is a popular tale that most children will have heard of. The focus is usually on the part where Jonah is swallowed by a 'big fish' and three days later thrown up on a beach! It is a great story to engage the children's imagination. The difference between Jonah and the other prophetic books is that it only gives us one sentence of what he preached! The whole book is the telling of the story of Jonah's disobedience to do what the Lord asks and how he runs away from what he should do.

This lesson is focused on the thought that God may ask us to do things that we think are impossible or just plain scary. Just as Jonah ran as far away as he could from his set task, so we also may find ourselves trying to avoid situations that will make us uncomfortable. As Christians we are called to share the word of the Lord (Matthew 28:19) and sometimes it will be easy to share the good news of Jesus' love. However, there may be other times when the Lord asks us to deliver words that are more difficult...just as Jonah found out! It is at these times in our lives that we must trust fully in the Lord and rely on His strength to sustain us for the task.

It is important when engaging with children on this sort of topic that you, as a leader, are willing to share part of your own journey and experiences (you will, however, need to be wise in the amount/depth that you share). They need to hear of how you have navigated through tough situations and how you have relied on God's strength to give you all you needed at the time. This helps to connect a story from the scripture into real life experience.

### What you will need:

#### For 'Connecting In'

- Whiteboard/markers or butchers paper

#### For 'The Main Thing'

- Clip – 'Overboard: the story of Jonah' (<http://youtube/3V3jfE4QBOQ>)

- Computer, iPad or projector to play the above clip
- Bible readings and questions for each group
- Pens
- Bibles
- Whale/Jonah template
- Glue stick
- Butchers paper
- Textas

#### For 'Tying In'

- A ball (tennis ball or beach ball)

#### For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.



## Connecting In

### Simon Says...

Play a game of Simon Says with your group.

- Start by giving simple instructions of fun and easy things to do: put your hands in the air, jump on one foot etc. You don't need to get anyone out at this stage, just keep it fun.
- After a while, start giving some harder or less fun instructions: lick your elbow, smell someone else's feet, do 20 star jumps etc. This time the children can choose not to do the task and go out of the game.
- Keep playing as long as it is fun but make sure that you let the children have time to complain about the tasks that are a little less fun!
  - How did you feel about being told what to do when the instructions were easy?
  - Did your feelings change when the instructions got a little less fun?
  - How did you feel about doing some of those tasks?
  - Put up your hand if you chose not to do the instruction and got out of the game!

**Link:** We have had some fun playing a game where you might have made a choice not to do something, today we are going to explore the story of Jonah and how God asked him to do something that he didn't want to do. Jonah tried to get out of doing his task and got into a fishy situation. God didn't give up on Jonah, was patient with him and gave him another chance, and he chose to do the right thing that also made a difference for others.



### Brainstorm...

Using a whiteboard or some butchers paper, ask the children to list some things that they like to do (play soccer, read a book, watch a movie, go to the beach etc.) Then, on the other side of the page, brainstorm some things that they don't like to do (tidy their bedroom, homework, doing the dishes, taking the rubbish out etc.)

- I wonder why you like doing those things.
- I wonder if you try to get out of doing the things that you don't like doing?
- Can you tell us why you don't like to do those things?
- What do you think would make them more enjoyable to do?

**Link:** There are things that you like to do and then those that you don't, just as we have looked at today, we are going to explore the story of Jonah and how God asked him to do something that he didn't want to do. Jonah tried to get out of doing his task and got into a fishy situation. God didn't give up on Jonah, was patient with him and gave him another chance and he chose to do the right thing that made a difference for others.

# The Main Thing

## Jonah's story in four parts...

For this section you will need to divide your group into smaller groups or if you have a smaller group you might like to take turns in reading the passages and explore the questions together. They will need to have Bibles and the questions to explore in their groups. You might also like to give each group some butchers paper and textas to help them explore this story. You will also need access to the YouTube clip below either on a computer, iPad or through the projector. This will be a great start for the children as they explore the story of Jonah.



Clip – 'Overboard: the story of Jonah' (<http://youtu.be/3V3jfE4QBOQ>)

### Reading 1: Jonah 1:1–17 'Jonah runs from the Lord'

- I wonder what stands out for you in this passage.
- What was Jonah asked to do? Explore together why he didn't do it.
- Where did Jonah go instead? What happened?
- I wonder if you might have felt like doing something like this. Why?

### Reading 2: Jonah 2:1–10 'Jonah's prayer'

- I wonder what stands out for you in this passage.
- What did Jonah do while inside the big fish?
- How do you think Jonah was feeling about God?
- How do you think God was feeling about Jonah?
- What happened in the end of this chapter?
- Do you think there could have been a different outcome?

### Reading 3: Jonah 3:1–10 'Jonah goes to Nineveh'

- I wonder what stands out for you in this passage.
- What does God ask Jonah to do?
- Is this the first time God has asked Jonah?
- Is Jonah more willing to do it the second time? Why?
- Explore why Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh the first time?
- Did the people do what Jonah told them and change their behaviour?

### Reading 4: Jonah 4:1–10 'Jonah gets angry at the Lord'

- I wonder what stands out for you in this passage.
- How was Jonah feeling about the people turning to God?
- What does Jonah pray to God about? Why?
- Do you think this was a good end to the story of Jonah? Why/Why not?
- I wonder what you learn from and about God from this story.

## Go fish!

Make some simple whale shapes out of cardboard and make a hole big enough for a party blower to push through. Have enough Jonah figures cut out to write one word on each one for the memory verse. Cover the back of each Jonah cut-out with glue from a glue stick. Ask the children to blow their party blower out and catch a Jonah. Once all the Jonah's have been caught ask the children to assemble them in the right order and stick them down on some butcher's paper or cardboard.

Memory verse: 'Christ gives me the strength to face anything' (Philippians 4:13)

# Tying In

## Sharing a message...

Sharing something that is important to you can be difficult at times; you might feel scared or worried about what you have to say and how the people you are talking to might react. Jonah had those same struggles about sharing the message that God wanted him to communicate.

- I wonder if you have had a time when you have needed to share an important message with someone, maybe it was telling someone about being a follow of Jesus.
- If you were sharing about your faith, I wonder who you might find it difficult to talk to? Why?
- What if what you had to say was going to make someone sad or upset?



We must be prepared to share the word of the Lord to everyone. God asked Jonah to do a very important job for Him. God wanted Jonah to tell the Ninevites: 'The Lord has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!' (Jonah 1:2) That was a very scary message to deliver to a bunch of strangers! It can be easy to share the love of God with friends and family but what about people that we don't know? What happens when we need to say things that others may not want to hear? God may want us to remind a friend about the promise that they have made as a Junior Soldier if they are making some bad choices. God may lead us to tell a bully at school about Jesus. These things may seem really hard to do but if we remember our verse from Philippians 4:13 ('Christ gives me the strength to face anything') it will be easier.

Remember, too, that God doesn't only want us to challenge someone or warn them of behavior that displeases Him—sometimes God wants us to give someone a word of encouragement or praise or thanks. For some people, this can be a hard message to deliver, too. Imagine walking up to someone and saying, 'I think you did that really well, and I think even God is pleased with you.' Trust God, He will give you the words to say.

Note also that whenever we talk to someone as a Christian, we are representing God and should talk to someone in love (Ephesians 4:15), with gentleness (Galatians 6:1) and with the truth and grace that Jesus modeled (John 1:14).

When Jonah finally did what God had asked and delivered the message of doom to the people of Nineveh a great thing happened—they listened to him and they changed their behavior and were saved from doom!

## Prayer and reflection...

Ask the children to sit in a circle and quietly think about what God may be saying to them. Allow a few moments for quiet reflection (it can be hard to hear God when we are always talking—make sure you help the children to stop and focus on God and clear their mind; this is something that will take time to get used to and need practice but it is an important thing that we need to help children explore and practice in a safe environment).

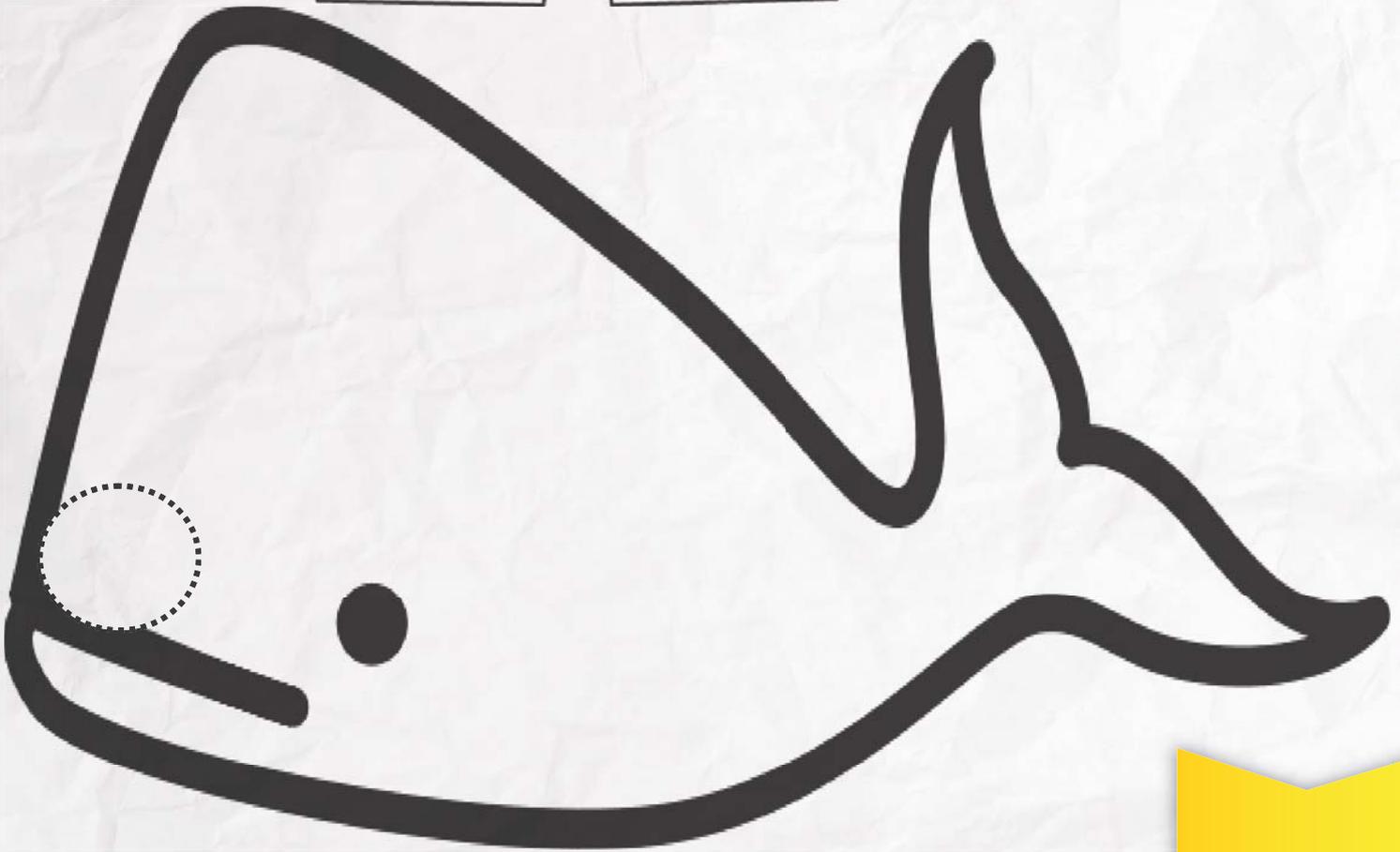
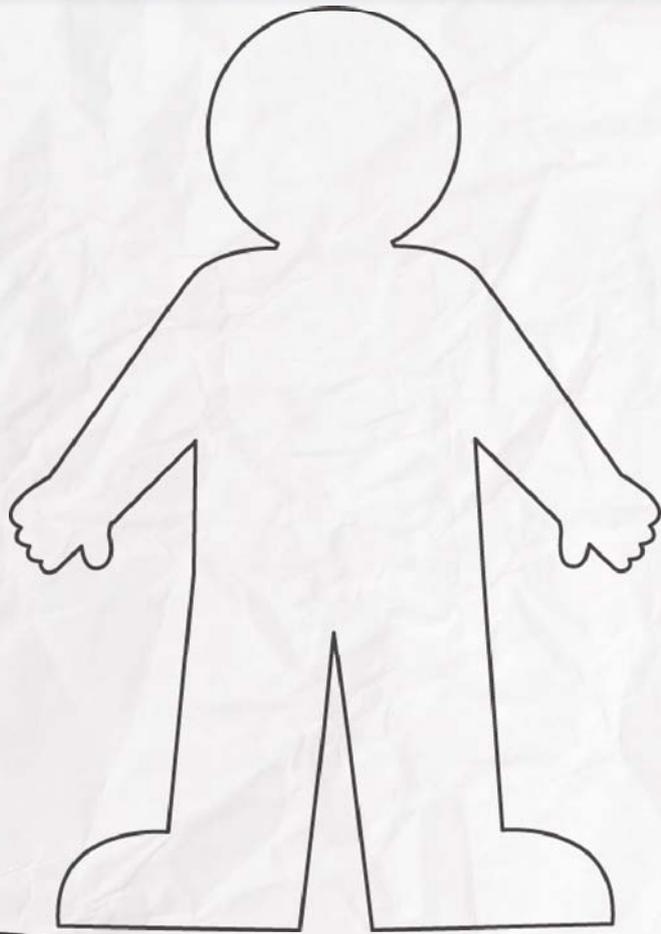
Use a tennis ball or inflatable beach ball and as you roll it to a child say: 'I pray \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name), that God will give you strength this week to share His words.' That child can then roll the ball and pass the same prayer onto another child in the group. Continue until everyone has had a turn. Have a leader finish off with a prayer for all the children.

# Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

## Stop & Listen...

- Take time this week to stop and listen to God and pray about the things that come to mind.
- Write or draw anything that God shows you, says to you or reminds you of during this time.
- Share what you have drawn or written down with someone this week.
- Pray that God will give you the courage to share His messages with others.



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